



YOUR LETTERS

MAILBOX

It's time to get personal, as we tackle the privacy implications of the Human Rights Act and the spamming implications of publishing readers' email addresses in the magazine

★ Private practice Human Rights and wrongs



I know I am an out-of-date old fool, but this European Court of Human Rights thing has me puzzled. I learnt from last month's *Zygote* (*Shopper* 240) that if I use my employer's computer and internet connection for my own purposes while he is paying me to work, if he should inspect his equipment and discover this it would be a breach of my right to privacy.

I wonder, would it also be a breach of my right of privacy if he observed me as I was stealing his money or goods and took me to task for it? The strange thing about the Human Rights Act is that, in practice, it seems to benefit only the dishonest.

Richard Woollacott

The rules surrounding the rights of employers and employees are a grey area. Generally speaking, a company is permitted to monitor the use of its resources, such as telephone and internet services, as long as it has an official policy in place. It needs to ensure that employees are aware of this policy.

Employees are also usually permitted to use these resources for their personal use, up to a point. There also exists a requirement to provide employees with a level of privacy when they do so. For example, it may be acceptable to monitor the number, duration and destination of phone calls an employee makes, but in most cases a company would not be allowed to listen in to the call itself. The same goes for email, which may be monitored at a certain level but not spied on.

In 2007 the UK government was found to have violated an employee's human rights specifically because the organisation for which she worked had not notified her that it was monitoring her communications. Taking reasonable steps to inform employees seems to be key here. Although this particular case was found in 2007, it covered events

occurring between 1998 and 1999. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) was subsequently introduced, in 2000. It clarifies some areas of the regulations governing employers monitoring communications.

In your theoretical scenarios, you compare using the company network for personal use with stealing money. This does not match with the policies used by most companies and other organisations, which recognise that a certain amount of fair use is acceptable. Arguably, allowing people to use the internet at lunchtime could mean better productivity, as they are happier and spend more time at their desks. Allowing a spot of online banking at lunchtime is better than having all your workers leave to queue on the high street.

Ultimately, if a company wants to ban its employees from making any personal calls, sending email and using the web it can, but it needs to make this policy clear (along with its intention to monitor use), and the end result will be a fairly discontent workforce.



▲ Employers can monitor workers' phone calls and emails, but they need to make their policies clear

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MIXING VISTA WITH XP



I hope this isn't one of those stupid questions, but before I go out and buy myself a laptop, I want this little worry sorted. At home I have a PC running Windows XP Home. I use it for iTunes, surfing the web and playing games. If I treat myself to a new laptop that runs Windows Vista, am I going to have to upgrade my home PC to run Vista, too?

I know there is the option of buying laptops loaded with Windows XP, but that just feels a bit second-hand. I read in *Shopper* 239 that there is a 'downgradable' Vista, but that makes no sense to a mere mortal such as me.

Adam P Henly

There's no significant reason why you should have to upgrade your current Windows XP system just because you intend to buy a new laptop running Vista. If both

systems are used independently of each other, there's certainly no reason to upgrade. Even if you want to link them together over a network, you can do so using two different versions of Windows.

You can certainly share files and printers using the Home versions of both XP and Vista, and both versions will work with each other. If you encounter problems, check the firewall on both PCs. Readers who are running a Windows XP server will need to download the LLTD Responder (<http://tinyurl.com/2b3lkn>) if they want it to appear in the Network Map feature of Vista client PCs.

The Vista systems that can be downgraded to XP are useful for some people, notably businesses that have not tested Vista for use with their critical systems. Most home users will be fine with Vista, although compatibility with hardware can be a problem.

In fact, having one system running XP and another using Vista is a pretty useful configuration. If you find that any of your hardware fails to work properly with

Vista (see *Advanced Projects* on page 152) you can go back to using it with your XP computer with minimum fuss.

Sometimes software comes with multiple licences, allowing you to install it on more than one PC. This is often the case with home versions of security software such as anti-virus packages. If your chosen security programs work with both XP and Vista, which is normal, you can take advantage of multiple licenses without having to upgrade the XP system to Vista.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF SPAM



I was most concerned with your response to Mike Trollden's request for help in *Helpfile*, *Shopper* 240. In his request he clearly gives his email address as mike@<username>, which I assume is his way of protecting his anonymity. I assume you cut and pasted this information into the article. Then, at the end, you print his complete email address. Why? He was trying to stop spam, not get more.

In fact, you print the email address of every contributor to *Helpfile*. If I was an unscrupulous spammer, what better way would there be of getting valid email addresses than reading *Helpfile*? You don't print them in *Letters*.

Please don't print my or anyone else's email address unless asked to do so. You know it makes sense.

Chas Large

Spammers certainly make their money by using large lists of valid email addresses, sending unsolicited email to potential customers. To make this type of business viable these lists need to be enormous, containing millions of addresses. To collect these lists spammers use a number of automatic techniques, which do not include manually scraping addresses from the pages of printed magazines. This would be incredibly inefficient. There are much easier and faster ways to gather addresses, many of which are illegal but nevertheless attractive to spammers.

The *Helpfile* section of *Computer Shopper* has a different policy to publishing readers'

personal details than the rest of the magazine. As we state on the opening pages, "we include them in *Help* so that other readers with experience of similar problems can share their solution... If you would prefer not to have your email address published, please say so."

We publish contributors' email addresses so that other readers can contact them directly. We don't receive unusually high levels of spam in these accounts, which backs up our theory that the spam kings are not trawling through back issues of *Shopper* to furnish their databases.

COOL IT



I hope nobody acts on your advice that the CoolerMaster Hyper TX 2 is "92mm high, and should fit in most cases". This CPU cooler is in fact 136.5mm tall, according to CoolerMaster's website. The vertically sited fan alone is 92mm in diameter, and there's a fair-sized chunk of heatsink plus heatpipes below that. The CoolerMaster Vortex 752 might be a better bet for cases with restricted headroom.

Cluny MacPherson

It's a fair cop. We got our figures a bit mixed up but, despite that, we still believe the Hyper TX 2 will fit in most regular PC cases. The Vortex 752 is certainly a low-profile model and it is nearly half the height of the Hyper TX 2. If your case is crowded, it would be a sensible choice.

A BLACK AND WHITE ISSUE



There are a lot of good printers available at reasonable prices that can print in both black and white and colour. However, I find that even when using them to print only black and white they still use the coloured inks. This results in unnecessary expense in replacing ink cartridges that haven't intentionally been used. Why do they do this? Why doesn't mono printing only use the black ink cartridge?

To try to get around this I've looked to see if I can find a good-quality mono-only printer. So far I've drawn a blank. Is such a printer still available? And are there printers where the

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WRITE IN AND WIN!

If you want to make the most out of your home movies and photographs, then Adobe's Photoshop Elements 6 and Premiere Elements 4 are the best and easiest way to do so. If you fancy getting your hands on these products, there's no need to put your hand in your pocket; all you have to do is write a great letter. Get it printed as our Star Letter, and a copy of both applications will be winging its way to you in the post.

Photoshop Elements 6 is the best home photo-editing application. Its powerful features are taken from the full Photoshop application, so you can get the same results, but Elements is a lot easier to use. Premiere Elements 4 does a similar job for movie making, pulling its features from the high-end Premiere software, but making it all easier to use so you'll be able to produce Hollywood-style movies from the comfort of your home.

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YOUR LETTERS

coloured ink cartridges can be replaced by extra black ink cartridges? As far as I can see the coloured ink cartridges tend to be a different size to the black one, so I'm guessing that this might not be an option.

John Collard

What your printer is doing is using a combination of three coloured inks to create composite black and greyscale tones. Without knowing which printer you're using we can't make any specific recommendations about your device, but you may want to check your printer driver to ensure that you've disabled options such as 'use composite black' (which is often enabled when a printer begins to run low on black ink or detects a fault in the black ink cartridge). You will also want to set your printer to a mono print mode, rather than leaving it at the default colour mode or the auto mode.

Most modern ink cartridges contain a chip that communicates information about the

cartridge to the printer, including its colour, so switching the colour cartridges for black would be unlikely to work even in the rare case of printers that use similarly sized cartridges for colour and black inks.

Probably the most practical solution would be to buy a mono laser printer. Mono laser printers are much more economical to run as they use a single black toner cartridge. Mono laser printers are also very affordable to buy. Our current recommendation is Samsung's ML-2510 (see 'Also Consider...', *What's New*, page 32), which costs £65 including VAT from www.ebuyer.com.

BROADBAND RIP-OFF REVISITED



I have a few comments to add to your reply to Colin Partington's 'Broadband Rip-off' letter in

Letters, Shopper 240. When I first had ADSL I experienced strange line problems. My router wouldn't sync at all with the exchange unless the phone was off the hook. The signal-to-noise margin reported by the router leapt up when the receiver was lifted, and slowly reduced again over half an hour or so after the receiver was replaced. I could also hear quiet, modem-like noises on the phone while the router attempted to achieve sync. Eventually a section of cable between the house and the street junction box was replaced and I've had no problems since.

Another thing that can really hurt an ADSL connection is poor-quality extension wiring in the house. The way to test for this is to take the faceplate off the BT linebox and plug the ADSL router/modem and nothing else into the



▲ Many inkjet printers use a combination of coloured inks to produce black ink

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◀ A faceplate splitter can help boost ADSL speeds if your extension wiring isn't up to scratch

diagnostic socket inside. If you achieve good speeds this way and poor speeds with the house wiring in the circuit, the cheapest solution is to buy one of the master faceplate splitters found at www.solwise.co.uk/adsl_splitters.htm. The additional upside of this is that you no longer need microfilters at the extension sockets. This faceplate is essentially a microfilter, putting all the house's extension wiring on the 'phone' side of the filter.

The downside, of course, is that the ADSL router/modem can be used only in the DSL socket on the replacement faceplate. I've fitted one of these for a friend who could get no signal at all with conventional microfilters, but who now gets a connection speed of between 700 and 1,000Kbit/s.

Finally, you suggest asking for the gain to be turned up on the phone line. This is good advice for dialup, but not for ADSL. It actually makes the connection worse. If the line's already had the gain turned up, it's worth asking for it to be turned down again.

Alastair M Robinson

Jacking a broadband modem or router into a dedicated DSL socket that has been isolated from the rest of the phone wiring is most certainly an effective way to get a clean connection. We've found that you can alleviate the restriction of needing to sit the router near the socket by running an extension cable from the socket to a more suitable location. This makes most sense when the socket is in an exposed position, such as by the front door or in a busy hallway, or happens to be nowhere near a power socket (which you'll need for the router).

For maximum stability, you should use a CAT5 twisted pair cable, although standard CAT5 will work fine for most people. A sensible maximum working length is around 30m. Avoid running this cable in parallel with power cables as it may introduce more interference.

SOCKET TO ME



Having toyed with the idea of setting up a home recording studio in order to improve my playing, I was pleased to see your 'Create Your Own Recording Studio' feature (*Shopper* 238-240).

I decided to opt for the equipment in the Example 2, 'A Shopping List for Singer-Songwriters', and treated myself to an early Christmas present. Having trust in your recommendations, I purchased a Tapco Link USB audio interface, two Samson C01 microphones with accessories, two Samson Resolve 40a compact active monitor speakers and two jack cables.

On delivery I began setting up the equipment. All was going well until it came to connecting the monitors to the audio

interface. Because you recommend using 1/4in jack cables, I assumed all would be well. The Resolve 40a connection is RCA input only, however, and to the right monitor only. The left monitor is connected using push terminals. The result is that you can only plug into one of the monitor inputs on the audio interface (using a 1/4in-to-1/4in adaptor) and therefore can only get output from one monitor.

I opted for the Resolve 40a monitors due to lack of space and budget. In reality I've paid for a single monitor and useless jack cables. I could have purchased a higher-specified single monitor with a 1/4in jack connection for £90.

R Greig-Brown

The bad news is that we did make a mistake when creating this shopping list. We changed our mind about the recommended monitor after adding the cables to the list. This meant that we recommended the wrong cables. The speakers have RCA (phono) inputs, not jacks.

The good news is that fixing the problem is cheap and easy. You need two jack-to-RCA cables. Furthermore, you may have noticed that there are two RCA inputs on one of the speakers. You should attach the left and right outputs from the sound card to that speaker, then connect it to the other speaker with the supplied speaker cable.

Our repentant writer is happy to post you the necessary cables to ease your pain if you send us your address.

DOTTY QUESTION



I'm a big fan of the magazine and refer to it whenever I'm making a purchase. I've a quick question for you, to which I'd really appreciate either an answer or a steer in the right direction because it's driving me crazy. I'm using Word 2007 and trying to insert a symbol for 'therefore'. You know the one: three dots in a triangle (∴) I am unable to locate it in the program or on the web. Any suggestions how to resolve this?

Adrian

'Therefore' is Unicode character 2234, therefore (ha, ha) you type: 2234 followed by Alt-X. If that doesn't work, see www.fileformat.info/tip/microsoft/enter_unicode.htm for other options.

JOKING ASIDE



I read with great interest the article in issue 240 about quantum computing. I found the final statement about D-Wave's computer rather funny and decided to let my partner in on it. So, at the end of *America's Next Top Model*, I first started with a basic explanation of the theory to help her understand the joke. At the end of the explanation, she summed up a quantum computer in a simple sentence: "So, basically it's a female computer."

I just had to share this with you.

David Webster

While we admire your bravery for embarking on a long explanation of a joke that relies on an understanding of quantum computing, we also have the utmost sympathy for your partner. Now, did you hear the one about God and the Higgs Boson? ☺

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